

Ottawa • Timeline

The convoy crisis in Ottawa: A timeline of key events

First trucks arrive and 19 days later, Ottawa's police chief resigns

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From then to now: A timeline of the convoy protest in Ottawa

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Starting in late January, thousands of protesters have occupied Ottawa's downtown core, frustrating residents and politicians, and resisting all efforts from law enforcement to get them to leave. Here's how the situation has played out so far.

Thousands of protesters began occupying the streets of Ottawa just less than three weeks ago, pledging to stay until all COVID-19 mandates and restrictions were removed,

While the message and purpose of the occupation has somewhat shifted, one thing remains: turmoil for residents and business owners in the downtown core.

The Ottawa Police Service has been the target of harsh criticism over its handling of the convoy crisis before and during the occupation, which culminated in the resignation of former police chief Peter Sloly.

Here's a look back at how this started and where Ottawa sits now.



Supporters cheer on drivers in the protest convoy headed for Ottawa from an overpass in Kingston, Ont., on Friday, Jan. 28. (Lars Hagberg/The Canadian Press)

Jan. 23: Convoy spreads message across Canada

As people in Ottawa slugged through another round of COVID-19 restrictions coupled with extremely cold temperatures, another challenge was about to arrive.

The so-called "Freedom Convoy" assembled in various locations across Canada and participants vowed to travel to the heart of the nation's capital to fight COVID-19 mandates and restrictions, including a vaccine mandate for truckers to cross the Canada-U.S. border.



A person pumps their fists as they stand on top of a transport truck after arriving on Wellington Street in front of on Parliament Hill on Jan. 28. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

Jan. 28: Protesters arrive for 1st weekend

The first Thursday and Friday saw the most eager members of the convoy parking their large trucks in Ottawa and blocking streets in the downtown core.

One of the protest's key organizers warned participants to demonstrate peacefully.

"We cannot achieve our goals if there are threats or acts of violence," said Benjamin Dichter.
"This movement is a peaceful protest, and we do not condone any acts of violence."

He warned protesters not to enter government buildings, disrespect police officers, act in a way that escalates tense situations, and make "any type of threat."

The City of Ottawa told residents to expect "significant traffic and transit delays or disruptions."



Crowds are seen from a helicopter near Parliament Hill on Jan. 29. This was the largest gathering during the occupation. (Alexander Behne/CBC)

Jan. 29: Gathering draws thousands

The largest demonstration took place as thousands converged on Parliament Hill, along with the constant honking of truck and train horns, plus the smell of diesel fuel throughout the downtown core.

Police said no incidents of violence or injury was reported at the event, despite being loud and disruptive. That didn't mean there weren't problems, though.

Hateful messaging was spotted amid the crowds, including at least one Confederate Flag and anti-Semitic messaging such as swastikas.

- [**Thousands opposed to COVID-19 rules converge on Parliament Hill**](#)

One demonstrator was caught on camera dancing on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, while demonstrators adorned a statue of Terry Fox — the inspirational runner who inspired the nation with his "marathon of hope" — with anti-vaccine material and a defaced Canadian flag.



There was an outpouring of condemnation over the way demonstrators decorated the Terry Fox statue. The Canadian icon remains revered more than 40 years after his 'Marathon of Hope' and untimely death at age 22. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)

Some people also reportedly harassed clients at the Shepherds of Good Hope and ate from the soup kitchen, which led to a [significant boost in donations to the shelter](#).

The blatant disregard for public health measures, including the wearing of masks, forced the Rideau Centre and other downtown businesses to close.

Jan. 30: More closures due to demonstration

On the first Sunday, the downtown core was once again filled with the sounds of honking and chanting as thousands gathered near Parliament Hill for a second full day of protests.

As of late Sunday evening, the Portage, Chaudière and Alexandra bridges were all closed to traffic, which caused headaches for residents in the region needing to travel to and from work.

- [Police presence will remain overnight as COVID-19 protests continue, says chief](#)

Several city-run facilities in the downtown would close Monday including Ottawa City Hall, the Rink of Dreams, and the Ottawa Public Library's Main and Rideau branches.

At the time, former police chief Peter Sloly said it was possible the protest — which did not have a permit — could extend for several more days.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced he had COVID-19 on Jan. 31 as thousands of protesters remained in Ottawa. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press via AP)

Week of Jan. 31: PM, mayor won't meet with protesters

On Monday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [condemned the anti-vaccine-mandate protests and said he wouldn't meet with them](#) because they promote hate and espouse anti-science views.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson said the [threat of violence was too great to actively force convoy protesters](#), and their vehicles parked in and around downtown Ottawa, to leave.

- [Vulnerable downtown residents hit breaking point as convoy enters 5th day](#)

By Tuesday, despite growing criticism from residents and academics, Ottawa's police chief praised the service's response to a protest he called "unique in nature, massive in scale, polarizing in context and dangerous in literally every other aspect of the event itself."

The force's hate crime hotline was also re-shared to encourage residents to share information about hate crimes related to the demonstrations.





Former Ottawa police chief Peter Sloly expressed a belief policing alone couldn't solve the ongoing demonstration in Ottawa. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

On Wednesday, Sloly said policing might not be enough to end the protest on its own.

- **Ottawans bracing as protest numbers expected to swell this weekend**

"This is a national issue, not an Ottawa issue," Sloly said. "I am increasingly concerned there is no policing solution to this."

Meanwhile, some of the protest organizers said they had empathy for the city's residents, [but insisted there was no other way to end all COVID-19 public health mandates across Canada.](#)

During a Thursday press conference, Tamara Lich — [the woman behind a GoFundMe campaign that had raised more than \\$10 million to support the protest](#) before it was paused — insisted protesters planned to stay in the city until their demands were met.

Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino said the RCMP was sending additional resources to assist Ottawa police at the request of the mayor.





Convoy fundraiser co-organizer Tamara Lich spoke on Feb. 3 at the Marriott Hotel in Ottawa. She did not take any questions from the media. (Francis Ferland/CBC)

Feb. 4: GoFundMe shut down

Ottawa police said they would increase their presence and further restrict access to the city's downtown to control what was expected to be another weekend of noisy protests, but they warned the situation remained volatile and dangerous.

- [Ottawa police launch 'surge and contain' strategy to manage protesters](#)

[In a Friday morning news release](#), police said their new "surge and contain strategy" would allow about 150 more officers to be dedicated to patrolling central Ottawa neighbourhoods and enforcing laws.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford said it was time for the "occupation" in Ottawa to end.

Meanwhile, some city councillors of downtown wards walked the streets and said they would continue to do so throughout the weekend to keep residents safe.

Also, the crowdfunding platform GoFundMe announced it would stop payments to the organizers of "Freedom Convoy 2022" and refund donors directly because the protest violated its rules on violence and harassment.





Two protesters ride horses by parked trucks and near Parliament Hill during the second weekend of the demonstration. (Adrian Wyld/The Canadian Press)

Feb. 5: 2nd weekend of demonstration

[Thousands return to streets for second weekend of truck convoy protest.](#)

Some protesters appeared to have settled in, with bouncy castles, barbecues, wooden shacks and piles of food and fuel appearing in downtown streets and nearby parks.



A protester carries empty jerry cans to troll police officers who were trying to crack down on the transportation of fuel to downtown vehicles. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

At an emergency meeting of the Ottawa Police Services Board on Saturday, board chair Coun. Diane Deans said the city was "under siege" and demanded a "concrete plan" to bring the demonstrations to an end.

- [No end in sight to Ottawa protests, not enough resources, says police chief](#)

Feb. 6: City declares state of emergency

The City of Ottawa declared a state of emergency on Sunday and Mayor Jim Watson described the situation in the nation's capital as the "the most serious emergency our city has ever faced."

- [Ottawa declares state of emergency as police boost enforcement, target protest's fuel supply](#)

That evening, dozens of heavily armed police officers descended on the baseball stadium parking lot on Coventry Road, which served as the staging area for the protesters operating in the downtown core.

Protesters said police removed the fuel that was being stored there to supply trucks parked in the city centre.



Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson declared a municipal state of emergency as the second weekend of the demonstration came to a close. (Felix Desroches/Radio-Canada)

Week of Feb. 7: Need more cops to 'turn up the heat'

As Ottawa moved into its second full week of dealing with the demonstration, Chief Peter Sloly told a meeting of Ottawa city council [he needed an influx of almost 2,000 police officers](#) and civilians to "turn up the heat."

Meanwhile, an [Ottawa judge granted an interim injunction](#) seeking to silence the honking horns downtown.

On Tuesday, police highlighted almost 25 per cent of the remaining 418 truck operators had children with them.

Police said that [hampered the force's response and led to concerns](#) about the children's safety.

The city increased fines for noise, idling and fires but demonstrators didn't seem deterred.



Zexi Li, a 21-year-old resident of Ottawa, is the face of a class-action lawsuit filed against organizers of the convoy that remains in the nation's capital. (CBC)

On Thursday, a group of protesters disrupted traffic around Ottawa's main airport for about two hours.

- **Police negotiators convince some trucks to leave, but most won't budge**

Police also said 911 lines were flooded with bogus calls, many of them originating from the United States.

[The Ontario Superior Court granted a request from the provincial government](#) to freeze access to millions of dollars donated through online fundraising platform GiveSendGo to the truckers' convoy protesting COVID-19 restrictions in Ottawa and at several border crossings.

Feb. 11: Ontario declares state of emergency

[Ontario declared a state of emergency](#) on Friday in response to convoy protests in Ottawa and at the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ont.



Two protesters sit in a hot tub at the intersection of O'Connor and Wellington streets in downtown Ottawa on Feb. 12. (Patrick Louiseize/CBC)

Feb. 12: 3rd weekend arrives

Despite warnings, increased fines, and a hit to the pocketbook of those occupying Ottawa, most left their vehicles in park, and police didn't move to change that.

The Saturday event featured demonstrators enjoying another live concert, but this time with an inflatable hot tub and more illegal fires to keep warm.

- **3 weekends, 1 hot tub: Ottawa residents reach protest boiling point**

The display was enough to push some residents to put their feet down — in the middle of Bank Street.

A [counter protest featured hundreds blocking trucks](#) heading toward the downtown core for several hours, while Ottawa police set up an integrated command centre with its provincial and federal policing counterparts.



An Ottawa resident holds a sign as they participate in a counter protest to stop vehicles from driving to Parliament Hill. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

Feb. 14: Emergencies Act announced

On Monday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time since it was crafted in 1988](#).

The move gives the federal government temporary powers to handle ongoing blockades and protests against pandemic restrictions.

Feb. 15: Police chief resigns

As day 19 arrived, Peter Sloly announced his resignation as the police chief in Ottawa.

- [Peter Sloly resigns as Ottawa's police chief, says force now 'better positioned to end this occupation'](#)

In his resignation letter, Sloly said he was proud of his ability to overhaul the force's culture to better reflect the "diversity of the community we serve."

He also said he was leaving the force confident it was "better positioned to end this occupation."





Interim Ottawa police Chief Steve Bell, left, answers a question at a news conference in early February. Bell takes over for Peter Sloly, right, who resigned on Feb. 15. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

Feb. 16: Warnings, police board changes

Day 20 brought [letters from police warning demonstrators of arrests](#) if they remained parked throughout downtown Ottawa streets.

The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa also issued a note to parents to make alternate arrangements if they are arrested.

There were more leadership changes when [Ottawa city council voted to overhaul its police services board](#), including ousting chair Coun. Diane Deans and the resignation of some board members in protest.

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